



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The
American Historical Review

THE ENGLISH BENEDICTINES AND THEIR BISHOPS
IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

THE relations between the religious orders and the diocesan episcopate form not the least interesting chapter in the history of the medieval Church. It is with one phase of the story that this article deals. The black monks of St. Benedict are taken for consideration partly because the Benedictines were the largest monastic order, and partly because, unlike the Carthusians and Cistercians, their houses were for the most part not exempt from episcopal jurisdiction. The fullness of English records permits of a more thorough examination of monachism in England than seems possible in the case of any other country. As institutions vary from generation to generation, this study has been further restricted to the thirteenth century, when the medieval Church reached the height of its development.

The internal affairs of a monastery were in charge of its superior, the abbot or prior, who, according to the rule of St. Benedict,¹ was elected by the entire community or by its wiser part. The right of election "can never pass for a privilege which detracts from the legitimate authority of the bishops. . . . On the contrary, he (St. Benedict) appeals to the bishops themselves to oppose the election if the monks have chosen not a censor of their faults, but one who would flatter them, and to place over the house of the Lord a worthy governor."² After choosing its abbot, a convent made known to the bishop of the diocese the result of the election and asked that he give it his episcopal confirmation. One example, taken from a monastic chartulary, will suffice to show the process.

On the eve of St. John Baptist's Day, 1261, the prior of St.

¹ J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, LXVI, 879, ch. lxiv.

² Thomassin, *Ancienne et Nouvelle Discipline de l'Église*, I. iii, c. 12.

Peter's, Bath, died. The subprior and convent sent messengers to the bishop, informing him of the prior's death and praying for license to elect his successor. This license was formally granted by the bishop on the following day. The convent proceeded to elect its prior, and the election was confirmed by the bishop when the result was made known to him.³

The application to the bishop for license to elect, which was part of the procedure followed by the monks of Bath, was unusual. Freedom of election belonged to each monastic community "as a natural privilege and a common right".⁴ The priory of St. Peter was the cathedral chapter of the diocese of Bath, and, although the prior was the actual superior of the convent, the bishop held theoretically the position of abbot.⁵ It was on that account that the convent applied to him for license to elect. A similar license was sought by the abbey of Eynsham, but for another reason; the Bishop of Lincoln from whom they asked the desired permission was the patron of the abbey, *ejusdem domus patronus*.⁶ Saving, however, for exceptional circumstances, a monastery did not require episcopal permission for the election of its superior.

Confirmation of an abbatial election was not an empty formality; the diocesan might withhold his confirmation for reasons which to him seemed sufficient. The election of Thomas Whalley as abbot of Selby in 1270 was quashed by the Archbishop of York, Walter Giffard, who then appointed as abbot the same man, and sent to the convent notice of the appointment with an order that the new superior be obeyed.⁷ Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, quashed the election of Thomas de Kerdinton to the priory of Caldwell, on the ground of defective vision, paralysis, old age, and ignorance, *propter defectum persone tam pro debilitate visus quam propter morbum paralitic' et etiam propter senium et insufficientiam litterature*;⁸ an array of defects which would seem to be good warrant for the bishop's action.

After confirmation of his election, the new head of a religious

³ *Two Chartularies of the Priory of St. Peter at Bath* (Somerset Record Society, 1893), nos. 253-259.

⁴ Thomassin, *Ancienne et Nouvelle Discipline*, I. iii, c. 32.

⁵ On the relation of a bishop to his cathedral chapter when it was composed of monks, see a letter of Innocent III., in *Patrologia Latina*, CCXIV. 1076-1083. The concordat of 1205 between the bishop and chapter of Bath is summarized in A. Luchaire, *Innocent III.: le Concile de Latran* (Paris, 1908), p. 127.

⁶ *Rotuli Grosseteste necnon Lexington* (Lincoln Record Society), p. 459.

⁷ *Register of Walter Giffard, Lord Archbishop of York* (Surtees Soc., 1904), pp. 217-220.

⁸ *Rotuli Grosseteste*, p. 325.

house was installed by the bishop or a deputy acting for him. Records of the institution and induction of abbots and priors are to be found in the various episcopal registers.⁹ It may here be pointed out that the priors of dependent houses, or cells of greater abbeys, were not elected by the monks of the priory, but were appointed by the abbot of the mother-house. This was because the monks of such a priory were members of the community, *commonachi*, of the mother-house, and not a separate convent; and their prior ranked as an administrative official of the great monastery.¹⁰ The appointment of the prior of a dependent house required episcopal confirmation, and the bishop instituted on presentation by the abbot and convent.¹¹ A priory situated in a diocese other than that in which was the mother-house, was under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese in which it was itself situated; and it was to him that the prior-designate would be presented for institution.¹² With the exempt abbeys, free from all diocesan jurisdiction, we are not here concerned; their elections were confirmed not by the bishop of the diocese, but by the pope.¹³

So important was his office that, after the election had been duly confirmed, an abbot received benediction, *munus benedictionis*, from the bishop; for his office was a spiritual one. At an earlier date this seems to have been made an occasion for requiring perquisites from the monasteries, but in 1138 a synod meeting at Westminster under the presidency of the papal legate provided that "at the consecration of bishops or benediction of abbots no cope nor ecclesiastical vestment nor anything else should be demanded".¹⁴ Similar provisions can be found among the privileges granted by the popes to individual monasteries.¹⁵

⁹ *E. g.*, *ibid.*, p. 509; *Reg. Romeyn* (Surtees Soc., 1913, 1916), I, 139; *Reg. Halton* (Canterbury and York Soc., 1913), I, 216; *Reg. Swinfield* (*ibid.*, 1909), pp. 426, 524; *Rotuli Welles* (Linc. Rec. Soc., 1912-1914), II, 136.

¹⁰ In the election of an abbot, the priors of dependent houses were summoned to take part; an indication that they were members of the community. See an account of the election of the abbot of St. Peter's, Gloucester, 1284, *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae*, R. S., vol. III., no. dcccxxxii.

¹¹ *Rotuli Grosseteste*, p. 255; *Rotuli Welles*, III, 44, 150.

¹² *E. g.*, the Bishop of Hereford instituted the prior of Bromfield, a cell of St. Peter's, Gloucester, *Reg. Swinfield*, p. 426; and the Bishop of Lincoln, the prior of St. Leonard's, Stamford, a cell of Durham, *Rotuli Welles*, III, 121.

¹³ So the Lateran Council, 1215, decreed; see *Gesta Abbatum S. Albani*, R. S., I, 307.

¹⁴ Wilkins, *Concilia*, I, 415.

¹⁵ *E. g.*, "Inhibemus ne quis pro benedictione abbatis . . . palefredum vel cappam seu quodlibet aliud . . . a monasterio vestro exigere vel extorquere presumat"—a Bardeney privilege. MS. Cotton. Vesp. E. XX., f. 24.

The benediction of an abbot was an occasion of great solemnity. In this the abbot might be the central figure, but care was taken that the bishop be shown the respect and honor due his position. So in an agreement made in 1237 between Archbishop Edmund Rich and the abbot and convent of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, it was stated that when the archbishop should come to bless the abbot, he was to be received by the convent with a procession and the ringing of bells.¹⁶

Of far greater importance than such ceremonial recognition of the episcopal dignity was the fact that on receiving benediction the new abbot made his pledge of canonical obedience to the diocesan, by which he admitted that he was subject to the bishop's jurisdiction.¹⁷ An abbot whose monastery had a dependent house in a diocese other than his own, took the oath of obedience to the bishop of that other diocese for the priory which his abbey had there. So we find Richard de Swinfield, bishop of Hereford, citing the abbot of Reading to appear before him to take the pledge of canonical obedience for the priory of Leominster and churches which Reading Abbey had in the diocese of Hereford.¹⁸ The abbot's profession, as it was called,¹⁹ is not recorded in Bishop Swinfield's register; but the bishop's jurisdiction was unquestionably recognized, for his exercise of it is more than once mentioned.²⁰ This particular case is the more worthy of note because the bishop had recognized the plenary jurisdiction of the abbey over Leominster, seven months before issuing his citation,²¹ an acknowledgment which he confirmed two years later.²² There was a long-standing quarrel between the bishops of Hereford and the abbots of Reading in regard to Leominster priory, a quarrel which Swinfield inherited from his predecessor,²³ but which evidently came to an end during his episcopate.²⁴

The most important exercise of episcopal jurisdiction over religious houses was the visitation, made by the bishop either in person

¹⁶ *Cal. Charter Rolls*, I. 238. Pope Gregory IX.'s confirmation of the composition is given in K. R. Misc. Bk. 27, f. 93.

¹⁷ The pledge made by the prior of St. Martin's, Dover, to the Archbishop of Canterbury is illustrative. *Reg. Peckham* (Canterbury and York Soc.), p. 207.

¹⁸ *Reg. Swinfield*, p. 21.

¹⁹ "... qui professionem suam, ut moris est, fecit. . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 302.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 111, 131, 149.

²¹ On April 20, 1283. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²² On April 19, 1285. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²³ *Reg. Cantilupe* (Canterbury and York Soc., 1907), p. 263, *passim*; *Reg. Swinfield*, pp. 28-32, 38.

²⁴ The register of his successor, Adam de Orleton, gives no indication that he had any trouble on this score.

or by deputy, with a view to maintaining faith and discipline in the monasteries and correcting any abuses which might there be found. Visitations were not formalities perfunctorily performed; they were thorough-going attempts to ascertain whether the life of the community visited was in accordance with the precepts of the Church and the monastic rule, and whether all its affairs, temporal as well as spiritual, were in satisfactory condition.²⁵

Records of visitations are to be found in the various episcopal registers, but in a number of cases no information is given other than that the bishop visited a certain monastery;²⁶ more often yet we have merely the announcement that on a given day the bishop would hold a visitation.²⁷ Further, the registers are so incomplete as records of episcopal activity that it would be rash to assume that we have a full list of the visitations of monastic houses made by any English bishop of the thirteenth century.²⁸

How searching the questions might be, by which the visitor sought to become informed as to the state of affairs in a monastery, may be judged from a set of "articles on which inquiry is to be made in the visitation of regulars", used apparently by the bishops of Ely.²⁹ These included questions as to whether the monks were obedient to the abbot, lived continently, observed silence in the cloister and at table, came regularly to service, always wore the monastic habit, and observed the fasts prescribed by the Church. Each member of the convent was asked whether in any particular there was need of correction and reformation in the person or administration of the abbot and other officials of the monastery, and also whether he knew or thought there was room for improvement in any one of the brethren. Questions were asked regarding the property of the monastery; whether the convent was in debt, and, if so, to whom and for what amount; whether any of its possessions had been alienated, and so on. An examination conducted along such lines, with questions asked of each member of the community, the lay brothers as well as the professed monks, could not but give

²⁵ On this see G. G. Coulton, "The Interpretation of Visitation Documents", *English Historical Review*, XXIX. 16-39.

²⁶ *E. g.*, *Reg. Romeyn*, I. 104; *Reg. Godfrey Giffard* (Worcestershire Hist. Soc., 1898, 1902), pp. 6, 379.

²⁷ *E. g.*, *Reg. Wickwane* (Surtees Soc., 1907), pp. 28, 54; *Reg. Romeyn*, I. 67; *Reg. Godfrey Giffard*, p. 157.

²⁸ The largest number of monastic visitations recorded in any episcopal register of the thirteenth century is in that of Godfrey Giffard, bishop of Worcester, 1265-1301. Other registers, *e. g.*, that of Grosseteste, have practically none.

²⁹ Brit. Mus., MS. Add. 9822, ff. 55, 56.

the visitor a mass of information sufficient in quantity and scope to serve as a basis of judgment on the condition of the convent.

Such a set of articles is of interest because it shows the various phases of conventual life into which the bishop made it his business to inquire when making a visitation; but it gives no information as to the state of the monasteries save, perhaps, by implication. The question *an persone aliquæ suspecte vel contra honestatem religionis ingrediuntur infra cepta monasterii* would not be asked without reason. On the other hand, that such questions were asked, does not necessarily mean any prevalence of monastic laxity, though it may be evidence that at times the monastic rule was not carried out to the letter.

Fortunately, records of the answers given to questions asked in the course of a visitation occasionally find a place in the registers. Corrections which the bishop thought ought to be made were committed to writing and sent to the abbot and convent after a visitation; and some of these we have. From such material, the answers of the monks and the orders of the bishops, some idea can be obtained as to the state of affairs which episcopal visitations of monasteries disclosed.

The register of Walter Giffard, archbishop of York, contains an account of a visitation of Selby Abbey, held in 1275, by a clerk of the archbishop.³⁰ In addition to other matters, the answers of the monks to the visitor's questions are given. They indicate an unfortunate state of affairs in general, and a low state of morality in particular:

Dominus Gilebertus de Lyndeseye, juratus et examinatus, concordat de diffamatione abbatis cum prejurato; nomen mulieris ignorat. . . . Dominus Thomas de Eyton, laicus, juratus . . . dicit de germano abbatis cum prejuratis; adiciens ipsum esse conjugatum, et quod continuat alterum adulterium cum pluribus . . . Alexander Niger, monachus, tenet Cristinam Bouere et Agnetem filiam Stephani, de qua suscitavit prolem, et quamdam mulierem nomine Anekous, de qua suscitavit vivam prolem apud Crol, et aliam apud Sneyth quae vocatur Nalle, et alias infinitas apud Eboracum et Akastre et alibi, et quasi in qualibet villa unam; et fetidissimus est, et recte modo captus fuit cum quadam muliere in campis, sicut audivit.

The picture is not a pleasant one. The answers given are refreshing in their frankness, and one must agree that *fetidissimus* was an adjective well chosen to characterize Alexander Black; but otherwise the visitor's account is sorry reading.

³⁰ *Reg. Walter Giffard*, p. 324 *et seq.* In part in *Coucher Book of Selby* (Yorkshire Arch. and Topog. Assoc., Record Series, vol. XIII.), II. ix.

Some four years later Archbishop Giffard's successor, William Wickwane, visited Selby Abbey in person and found much that needed to be corrected.³¹ The abbot did not observe the rule of St. Benedict; he did not sing mass; he did not preach; he did not teach; he seldom attended the chapter; he did not make corrections, as he was bound to do; he seldom ate in the refectory; he never slept in the dormitory; he seldom entered the choir; he seldom heard matins out of bed; he did not visit the sick—his list of misdeeds is indeed a long one. Alienation of property without the consent of the convent, committing manors to unsuitable persons, and appointing unworthy officials are included. One interesting charge against the abbot is that of using witchcraft to recover a body from the Ouse: "Item, compertum est quod abbas procuravit Elyam Faunelle, incantorem et sortilegum, ad querendum corpus fratris sui defuncti, submersi in aqua de Use, propter quod expendit magnam pecunie summam." Nor had the irregularity found there in Archbishop Giffard's time been removed: "Item, abbas notatur de incontinenia cum domina de Queneby, et cum filia Bodeman manentis ad portam monasterii, de qua suscitavit prolem, ut dicitur; pro qua adhuc pendet purgacio sibi indicta per archiepiscopum jam defunctum." It is no wonder that the abbot of Selby, already excommunicate on several counts, was removed by the archbishop. The sentence of deposition and the notice of it which was sent to the king are in the register with the account of the visitation.

There is no reason to suppose that this riot of lawlessness and debauchery represented the normal state of affairs even in this particular abbey. Forty years before Giffard's day, Archbishop Gray had visited Selby Abbey and issued a decree ordering certain reforms.³² These relate entirely to the administration of the abbey, to financial matters, and the work of the officials of the convent. Archbishop John le Romeyn, who succeeded Wickwane in the see of York, visited Selby more than once.³³ The measures taken by his immediate predecessor seem to have had the intended effect; for in the one decree which his register contains concerning Selby³⁴ the archbishop merely repeats, with slight variations, the decree issued in 1233 by Gray.

Of quite another sort were the conditions which Thomas de Cantilupe, bishop of Hereford, found and attempted to remedy at Leominster priory, a cell of Reading Abbey. The finances of the

³¹ *Reg. Wickwane*, p. 22 *et seq.*

³² *Reg. Gray* (Surtees Soc., 1872), p. 327.

³³ *Reg. Romeyn*, I. 67, 104, 151.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I. 70.

priory were so disorganized that the king took it under his protection and gave the custody of its estates to one of his officials to provide for the necessary wants of the monks, and for the poor, and to use whatever might remain toward paying the indebtedness of the convent.³⁵ At Leominster the monks and the townspeople shared the same church, with much resultant friction. In directions issued to the priory after a formal visitation,³⁶ the bishop forbade the locking of the church doors which prevented the free access of the people, who ought at all times to be able to enter the church to perform their devotions. The people had complained, too, that they were not allowed to ring the bells which they themselves had bought; and the bishop directs that they shall not be hindered in that pious practice. The priory had curtailed its daily distribution of food and alms to the poor; and there was a suspicion that its endowments were being misapplied. On all these points the convent was commanded to mend its ways. The directions were not followed. A few months later, the bishop wrote again and ordered³⁷ that within fifteen days the offending doors be removed, under a penalty of twenty pounds.

With the outcome of the dispute between the monks and the townspeople, we are not here concerned. The directions issued by the bishop after his visitation may show that the zeal for pure religion was not conspicuous in Leominster; but there is evidence of nothing more reprehensible than tangled finances and an unbecoming squabble about the rights to use a church. Later in the bishop's episcopate, there was a scandal concerning the relations of the sub-prior with a nun and other women; but the case was carried to the papal court, and the outcome is not recorded in the register.³⁸

It must be borne in mind, in considering these directions issued by diocesans to monasteries after making a formal visitation, that they are the exception and not the rule. Of the visitations of which there is record in the episcopal registers, an overwhelming proportion are simply mentioned as taking place; no decrees of reformation, that is, are given. This is not conclusive evidence that in the course of such a visitation the bishop found no need of giving directions aimed at improving conditions. Such directions may have been given and not recorded in the register. The presumption would seem to be, however, that it was the grave and unusual cases which were placed on record. There is no evidence, in such records

³⁵ *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1272-1281*, p. 128; *Reg. Cantilupe*, p. 37.

³⁶ *Reg. Cantilupe*, p. 46 *et seq.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 265-267.

of visitations as we have, that anything approaching the state of affairs which archbishops Wickwane and Giffard found at Selby was other than abnormal.

Visitations were not always welcomed by the monasteries. Quite apart from the fact that a strict examination is often anything but a pleasure to the person examined, especially if he has unfortunate failings which may become known, there are reasons why an abbot and convent might prefer not to be visited by their diocesan. Bishops did not travel unaccompanied, and they and their suites must needs be entertained by the monastery. The statement that Bishop Godfrey Giffard visited Pershore priory and remained two days at the cost of the house³⁹ may imply a considerable expense to the priory. It was the common practice for ecclesiastical dignitaries to receive a fee called the procuration when they visited officially the churches and religious houses within their jurisdiction. Bishop Godfrey Giffard's register contains a memorandum that he visited the abbot and monks of Winchcombe "and received his procuration there".⁴⁰ By an abuse easily understood the fee, *procuratio ratione visitationis*, was sometimes collected when there had been no visitation; the charge being, perhaps, considered fair enough since the parish or monastery which paid it had been spared the expense of entertaining the visitor and his train. Against this, a canon was passed at the council held at Oxford in 1222 under Archbishop Langton: "archidiaconis districtius inhibemus, ne aliquo modo procurationem recipiant sine causa rationabili, nisi illa die, qua personaliter visitant ecclesias; nec procurationem nec redemptionem pro visitatione extorquere praesumant."⁴¹

This canon seems to have been ineffectual. In 1268 the council of London, held by Ottobon, the cardinal-legate, passed a similar canon with a clause added to the effect that any one who received a procuration for a visitation which he had not made was suspended *ab ingressu ecclesiae* until he made restitution.⁴²

The monks objected, too, to the intrusion into their cloister of secular clerks in the bishop's retinue. The bishop himself was able to enter because he had jurisdiction over the regular clergy of his diocese, even though he himself had been a secular priest; but that was no reason why other seculars should accompany him. St. Mary's Abbey, York, obtained a privilege from Pope Urban IV. that the archbishop in his visitation should not be accompanied by

³⁹ *Reg. Godfrey Giffard*, p. 236. See also *ibid.*, pp. 165, 243.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴¹ Wilkins, *Concilia*, I. 588.

⁴² *Constitutiones Othoboni*, p. 114.

secular clerks, excepting two or three canons; and the privilege was transcribed into the archbishop's register.⁴³

It is not surprising that attempts were made by convents to become free from episcopal visitation. Certain abbeys obtained from the apostolic see exemption from all diocesan authority. Others tried to hinder the work of visitation or to prevent the diocesan from coming too frequently. The prior and convent of Durham appealed to the Holy See against the intended visitation of Archbishop Wickwane in 1281;⁴⁴ St. Mary's, York, obtained from Honorius III. a brief forbidding the archbishop to make a visitation more than once a year save in case of urgent necessity.⁴⁵

There was the further question whether the exemption which some monasteries possessed extended also to their dependent houses. This arose when Archbishop Peckham went to visit Great Malvern priory, a cell of Westminster, in 1283. "When he asked in due form to be admitted to visit them, R. called Baret, and R. de Vastoprato, proctors of the abbot of Westminster, arose and asserted that the priory of Great Malvern was privileged, and that neither the archbishop nor the bishop of Worcester ought to have any jurisdiction."⁴⁶ The priory seems never before to have claimed freedom from visitation; bishops of Worcester had visited it in 1234, 1237, 1238, and 1242;⁴⁷ Bishop Giffard had not only visited the priory but had deposed the prior in 1282;⁴⁸ but the king sent word that by entering Great Malvern the bishop had violated the rights of the abbot and convent of Westminster;⁴⁹ and in 1283 the bishop acknowledged the priory's exemption from diocesan jurisdiction and ordinary law.⁵⁰

The authority of the bishop as chief pastor was displayed not only in his visitations but also in synods, to which the religious houses as well as the secular clergy sent representatives when summoned by the diocesan. The practice of holding synods seems to have fallen into desuetude during the Middle Ages, but the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, directed that provincial synods be held an-

⁴³ *Reg. Romeyn*, I. 73.

⁴⁴ *Reg. Wickwane*, pp. 155-164. The matter was complicated by the whole question of the archbishop's metropolitan rights over the dioceses in his province. Cf. *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckham*, R. S., I. 161, 200. See also *Victoria County History, Durham*, II. 94.

⁴⁵ *Reg. Gray*, p. 152; *Cal. Pap. Reg.*, 1198-1304, p. 108.

⁴⁶ *Reg. Godfrey Giffard*, pp. 170-171.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 178.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 219; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1281-1292, p. 90.

nually to control ecclesiastical life and to secure the observance of ecclesiastical law.⁵¹ For some time this canon was not obeyed; it was over half a century later that Robert Kilwardby, archbishop of Canterbury from 1272 to 1278, "made a representative provincial synod the regular organ for the conduct of general ecclesiastical business" in England.⁵² Attendance at synods, either diocesan or provincial, involved to some extent a recognition on the part of those present that they were subject to the jurisdiction of the prelate by whom the synod had been summoned. In the twelfth century the abbot of Battle, summoned by the Bishop of Chichester to attend his synod, refused to go; but went later as a free agent.⁵³ The priors of Binham and Wymondham, cells of St. Alban's Abbey, contested the claim of the Bishop of Norwich to jurisdiction over them, and the case was heard by a commission of three appointed by papal authority. Among the terms of the settlement which they made was the provision that the priors should come to the bishop's synod, or send a proctor or an excuse, and that at synod they should "sit as other priors".⁵⁴

It would seem that attendance at the episcopal synod was the normal fulfilment of one of the pledges given in the oath of canonical obedience: *Vocatus ad te, veniam, nisi canonico impedimento fuerim impeditus*. That monasteries which claimed to be exempt from ordinary jurisdiction should refuse to send representatives to synods was to be expected. Roger, abbot of St. Albans from 1260 to 1290, refused to appear at the Bishop of Lincoln's synod, and when the case was carried to the courts, the Court of Arches decided in favor of the abbot.⁵⁵ Archbishop Peckham had some trouble in much the same way,⁵⁶ but such cases are obviously exceptional.

In addition to visitations, in which the bishop went to the monks, and the synods, when the monks went to the bishop, there were other occasions on which convent and diocesan were brought together. There were certain rites the performance of which was normally restricted to the episcopate, and the monasteries at times required the services of a bishop for just such purposes. None but a bishop could confer holy orders, so the diocesan ordained the members of monastic communities. The services of a bishop were needed to consecrate the churches and chapels belonging to the monasteries,

⁵¹ Ernest Barker, *The Dominican Order and Convocation*, p. 33.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁵³ *Chronicon Monasterii de Bello* (London, 1846), p. 26.

⁵⁴ *Gesta Abbatum S. Albani*, I. 278.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, I. 457.

⁵⁶ *Reg. Epist. Peckham*, R. S., I. 255.

and to bless their altars and ecclesiastical ornaments. From the bishop, too, were obtained the holy oil and chrism used in the sacraments of baptism and holy unction. "The chrism, the holy oil, the consecration of altars and churches, the ordination of monks or clerks who are to be advanced to holy orders, you shall receive from the diocesan bishop, if he is a Catholic and has the grace and favor of the apostolic see."⁵⁷ These words, or others of like import, appear again and again in briefs sent from Rome to the English convents. They are evidence of the diversity of ways in which the monks came in contact with the diocesan episcopate.

It was not only in the performance of episcopal functions for the monasteries, or in the exercise of his ordinary jurisdiction over the regular clergy, that a bishop came in contact with the Benedictines. His pastoral work, attending to the parochial life and activities of his diocese, involved him in relations with abbeys and priories scattered throughout the realm. "Of the members of Religious Orders in our Diocese", says a synodal statute of John de Pontissara, "some hold Churches to their own uses, others certain portions of particular tithes, others receive and keep annual pensions from Churches."⁵⁸ The monasteries, in other words, were the patrons of a large number of benefices and owned the advowson of many parishes. The monks did not themselves serve in their parishes; secular clerks were appointed to minister to the needs of the people. The episcopal registers are in large part records of institutions to livings, and they furnish us with some conception of the number of churches which religious houses held and also with information of the kind of clergy who were instituted. Such a register as that of Hugh de Welles, bishop of Lincoln from 1209 to 1235, gives us an idea of the importance of religious houses in one of the largest of English dioceses in the thirteenth century. The register is incomplete, there being ample evidence that all the bishop's official acts are not there recorded.

In the lists of institutions to churches in the diocese the following Benedictine houses are given as patrons: Abingdon, St. Albans, Bardeney, Beaulieu (a cell of St. Albans), Belvoir (another cell of the same house), Bury St. Edmunds, Coventry, Croyland, Durham, Eye, Eynsham, Freston (a cell of Croyland), Gloucester, Hertford (a cell of St. Albans), Humberston, Luffield, Peterborough, Ramsey, Reading, Rochester, Selby, Thorney, Walden, Westminster, Winchcombe, and St. Mary's, York.

⁵⁷ *Hist. et Cart. S. Petri Glouc.*, R. S., vol. III., no. dcccix.

⁵⁸ *Reg. Pontissara* (Canterbury and York Soc.), I. 110.

Of these it is recorded that in Hugh de Welles's episcopate St. Albans presented to five churches; Bardeney to fourteen; Beaulieu to four; Belvoir to ten; Bury St. Edmunds to two; Coventry to three; Croyland to sixteen; Durham to four; Eye to three; Eynsham to fifteen; Freston to five; Gloucester to three; Hertford to two; Peterborough to fifteen; Ramsey to thirteen; Reading to two; Rochester to two; Selby to six; Westminster to seven; Thorney to nine; St. Mary's, York, to three; and the others to one each.

Some of these institutions were to perpetual vicarages, others to chaplaincies, and a few to parsonships (*ad personatum*). There are instances in which the presentation was to a mediety, that is to say, to a part of the parish, in which case the other mediety might or might not be in the gift of the monastery. In general the presentee is described as clerk or chaplain, terms which furnish no clue as to what rank he held in the hierarchy. Eight presentees were in deacon's orders, or rather seven, for one received a second benefice without having been advanced to the priesthood. Forty-eight were subdeacons. Only one presentee is described as a priest. Some of the men were not even in the subdiaconate; the abbot of Westminster presented a man who was in minor orders, *accolitus*, he is called; and the requirement that the presentee must be ordained subdeacon occurs several times. There is little evidence that a man was expected to proceed to orders higher than that of subdeacon. Only in one case, where Thorney Abbey presented a subdeacon for institution to Haddon, is the condition expressed; unless he comes up for ordination the bishop will deprive him. On the other hand, the oft-repeated injunction that the presentee shall "frequent the schools" may be evidence that the living was given in order to enable the man to complete his course of study. Certainly it is evidence that the clerks to whom the religious houses gave their churches were not always fully qualified for their duties. And the darker side of medieval clerical life is suggested by this sentence, written of a chaplain instituted on presentation of the abbot of Croyland: "Si in domo suo vel alibi mulierem unde mala suspicio habeatur secum tenuerit, ecclesia ipsa spoliatur."

ALFRED H. SWEET.